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# Articulăte



A Journal of Literary and Cultural Criticism

Volume XIII- 2008

# Articulāte

A Journal of Literary and Cultural Criticism

*"You Can't Keep a Good Dog Down"*  
*Are You a Dog?*  
*All Dogs Go to Heaven* \*  
*Emily Toler '08*  
Spring 2008  
Volume XIII

\*  
*Mark*  
*Danny Conner '08*  
*"Peculiar Quarters: Pivotal Pleasures"*  
*Reading toward a Quarters' Crisis*  
*and a Quarters' Crisis*  
*Canon*  
*Emily Toler '08*

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Winner of the '08 Robert T. Wilson Award  
for Scholarly Writing

"You Can't Keep a Good Dog Down": American Mythology  
and the (Im)Possibilities of Change in *All Dogs Go to Heaven*

Emily Toler '08



Film is regarded as little more than a visual aid, as an interesting or entertaining garnish to the more substantial and traditional fare of research and pedagogy... [and] serious consideration of American film as American art, criticism, history, ideology, and culture is inhibited... Thus, as literature, as history, as significant culture, as rhetorical discourse, American films have for the most part been abused or neglected by American Studies.

Vivian C. Sobchack

In the quarter-century that has elapsed since Vivian Sobchack penned this lament, the boundaries of "scholarship" have expanded in recognition of the social, cultural, and historical significance of American film. Numerous film journals have been established, and their contributions to cultural studies have been acknowledged; films have become integral to the curricula of diverse courses and institutions; scholars have published articles investigating such diverse films as *Citizen Kane* and *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. The United States' films are finally used as valuable tools for representing and analyzing its culture – and rightfully so. The two are, as Sobchack observes, "mutually interdependent, each illuminating and providing a context for the other" (281). This interdependence mirrors the relationship between American literature and American culture: each informs the other, weaving (and being woven by) a complex web of history, sociology, and a preoccupation with certain mythic themes. Because the United States' films address these same issues, it seems logical

to consider the ways that they, like the nation's literature, employ these uniquely American myths to expose and potentially critique the culture of which they are a product and in which they participate.

Don Bluth's *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (1989) offers a unique opportunity to analyze how these mythic themes have been incorporated and interpreted in film. This animated movie tells the story of a dog named Charlie B. Barkin's quest for material success. After breaking out of the pound, Charlie tries to resume business with his former partner Carface, who has Charlie killed. Although Charlie goes to heaven, he steals a watch that enables him to return to the mortal world and seek his revenge. With the help of his sidekick Itchy, Charlie befriends an orphan girl named Anne-Marie and exploits her ability to talk to animals, using her to win bets at racetracks and hoarding the profits to open a casino of his own. As the story develops, however, Charlie grows increasingly attached to Anne-Marie and is ultimately forced to choose between saving himself and saving her.

In this paper, I analyze how *All Dogs Go to Heaven* incorporates and reshapes American mythic themes, suggesting that this film makes extensive use of two salient cultural toposes: the "triumphant underdog" and "moral redemption." After illuminating the evidence of these motifs, I interpret their function in relation to dominant ideology, situating my investigation in a Marxist-feminist framework. Finally, I evaluate the film's subversive potential and consider the implications of its cultural position and ideological agenda.

*All Dogs Go to Heaven* opens in 1939 at a New Orleans casino that caters to a unique, exclusively canine, clientele. Its inebriated patrons are gambling on intermittent rat races – thinly-disguised metaphors for the "rat race" of consumerist, capitalist society – that set the tone for the rest of the film. In the first race, a scraggy rat named Squadcar competes with four more robust animals. Although the stronger animals initially lead, Squadcar cleverly latches onto an opponent's tail and catapults himself across the finish line to victory. Similar patterns subsequently emerge: the Grand Chawhee, a decrepit horse, is the unlikely winner of his race; a tiny turtle bests a field of formidable opponents by deploying his hidden speed.

This same theme of usurpation is evident in the first song that the protagonist Charlie sings. Recently liberated from the pound, he has returned to reestablish business relations with his onetime partner Carface. When the casino's patrons express surprise that he has come back, Charlie avers that, even though his current socioeconomic position is somewhat less than desirable, his ambitions will not be stymied:

Oh, you can't keep a good dog down. No, you  
can't keep a good dog down.  
Look out, I'm still around, 'cause you can't  
keep a good dog down...  
So call me a mixed-up pup, but the only way  
this pup knows is up!...  
I've known hunger, I've known thirst, lived the  
best and seen the worst,  
But the only way I know to finish is to finish  
first!

The message this song sends is clear: *if he is clever and cunning enough, the underdog can win*. But Charlie's interpretation of the "triumphant underdog" trope fails to establish any respectable moral or ethical guidelines that its devotees should observe. The film's minor underdogs win by relatively legitimate means: Squadcar hitches a ride, but his own ingenuity enables his victory; the Grand Chawhee triumphs because his competitors willingly submit, but he himself does not cheat; the tiny turtle is justly rewarded for his speed. This contrast is particularly disturbing, as Charlie's preferred methods of success are less than honorable – and his motives are little better.

Indeed, Charlie is profoundly acquisitive, concerned almost exclusively with material gain. His first act after escaping the pound is to revisit his casino where, when the other dogs beg him to "spare a couple'a bones for old time's sake," Charlie asks: "Why settle for a couple'a bones when you can have the whole bank?" Similarly, when Carface suggests dissolving the partnership, Charlie is concerned with profiting – but not with losing his supposed friend. Consider their exchange:

"Fifty percent of this is yours, right, Charlie?  
Take it. You want a cut of the steaks?"  
"T-Bones? Porterhouses?"



"And one half of the mignons!"

Charlie's response, focused solely on maximizing his fleshy earnings, belies his avariciousness. Carface, too, is guilty of materialism; his cheeky reply demonstrates that both he and Charlie consider their partnership a purely economic enterprise. This lack of amity is made most apparent when Carface, who professes that he "does not wish that he should share fifty percent of the business," opts to kill his partner rather than compromise his own income.

Ironically, Charlie's murder gives him his first chance at moral redemption – another salient theme in the American cultural canon. In *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, this opportunity for ethical reform is invariably represented by a female character who exhibits many of the traits associated with essentialist feminism. This theoretical perspective asserts that there exists "a basic 'truth' about woman that patriarchal society has kept hidden" and that, to challenge this society, women can "abandon/reject socially constructed roles [and] adopt other, more truly female ones" (Kaplan 9). Although the specific characteristics that constitute "truly female roles" are certainly subject to debate, the purposes they fulfill seem similar:

The essential aspects of woman, repressed in patriarchy, are often assumed to embody a more humane, moral mode of being, which, once brought to light, could help change society in a beneficial direction. Female values become a means for critiquing the harsh, competitive, and individualistic "male" values that govern society and offer an alternate way, not only of *seeing* but of *being* that threatens patriarchy. (Kaplan 9)

In *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, two female characters perform this function: Annabelle, a dog-angel who manages heaven, and Anne-Marie, an orphan who can talk to animals.

After his murder, Charlie enters heaven through a red-and-pink tunnel unmistakably evocative of a birth – or rebirth – canal. This association with female organs and processes suggests that the path to moral redemption (heaven) can be obtained only through a female proxy. In heaven, Annabelle attempts to convince Charlie that a paradisiacal moral life of "doing whatever you wish, laughing and singing all day" is

preferable to a material life of "used cars and singles bars," but his masculine, immoral desire for revenge compels Charlie to return to the mortal world. (It seems that the mantra he professes at the casino – "I tried a life of virtue but prefer a life of sin" – holds true even in paradise!) Mythic moral redemption requires a complete transformation, however, so this malfunction can be only temporary. Because this trope is so closely associated with essentialist femininity, the agent who will transform Charlie must be another female character: Anne-Marie.

It is clear from the scene in which Anne-Marie is introduced that she, like Annabelle, embodies many of the hallmark traits that essentialist feminism describes. She is, quite literally, "repressed in patriarchy" (Kaplan 9); Carface has imprisoned her, abusing her ability to talk to animals to maximize his profits in the casino. But Anne-Marie's morality remains untainted by these "competitive and individualistic 'male' values" (9). She remains concerned with the well-being of Carface's rats: "[You have] a sore foot? You shouldn't run! And Twizzle has a cold? She should drink soup! And Squadcar has the flu? Oh, my." This female morality sharply contrasts the ethical voids of the male characters, whose primary concerns are materialistic.

When Charlie realizes that Anne-Marie's abilities can help him get the money he needs to take his revenge, he convinces her to leave Carface and join him – but only by promising her that they will "give the money to the poor" and that he will buy her "a new dress and new shoes... [because] nobody wants a scrawny little doll in rags." This is a particularly egregious example of Charlie's moral shortcomings: he blatantly lies about his plans for their proceeds (which will actually be used to realize his own ambitions) and shamelessly exploits Anne-Marie's desire to be adopted, suggesting that she will only be appealing with certain material possessions. Anne-Marie's unimpeachable *goodness* has already been established, so it is not surprising that she is outraged and threatens to abandon Charlie after discovering his lies. Because she is so valuable, Charlie has no choice but to acquiesce to her demands and share some of his profits with a poor canine family. Here, the goals of essentialist feminist critique are at least partially realized. Instead of sacrificing the "essential aspects of woman



[that] embody a more humane, moral mode of being," Anne-Marie uses those very traits to "help change society in a beneficial direction" (Kaplan 9). Moreover, by driving Charlie to altruism, she accomplishes two tasks: immediately benefiting the family he helps and sparking the moral transformation that is brought to fruition when Charlie sacrifices his own life to save hers.

Although it is clear that this essentialist female morality serves as the mythic agent of redemption, determining precisely what Charlie is being redeemed *from* is more problematic. The most obvious possibility is that he is being delivered from his greedy consumerism, as the film is rich with moments that enable a Marxist interpretation. Anne-Marie's insistence on helping the poor could certainly be considered an ethical norm; she is clearly the film's moral center, so it seems logical to conclude that the principles shaping her morality should shape those of the rest of the characters. Even before Anne-Marie's moral centrality is established, however, Charlie hints that he, too, might harbor a concern for the poor. On their first night together, he reads Anne-Marie excerpts from *Robin Hood* as a bedtime story:

So Robin Hood says to Little John, "This sheriff is a real bimbo. What say we knock him off and take the gold? Not for ourselves; we'll give it to the poor, worthless suckers who got it took in the first place."... So all the poor people was happy 'cause they wasn't poor now.

Charlie's interpretation, however unrefined, suggests that he is at least marginally concerned with the welfare of others.

More evidence that *All Dogs Go to Heaven* may advance Marxist themes comes when Anne-Marie convinces Charlie to share his earnings with the poor. The pair delivers a meal of pizza and cake "some of the poorest people" Charlie knows: a large canine family that is "broker than the Ten Commandments." The hungry puppies immediately attack the pizza, tearing into it in a frenetic free-for-all until there is only one piece left. The puppies vie for ownership until Charlie expresses an egalitarian vision through song:

What's mine is yours; what's yours is mine.  
The more you share, the more the sun'll shine.

Whether you're the boss or someone's pet,  
The more you give, the more you're gonna get.

You got a little or a lot, you got to share,  
'cause you know what:

Each other's all that we have got.

The sun'll shine if you share all the time.

This emphasis on sharing and community represents an egalitarian ethos that is markedly different from the one Charlie previously affirmed. Anne-Marie's morality has radically transformed him, so it seems reasonable to conclude that he has been saved from his selfishness and materialism. The final analysis, however, is less straightforward. Although these moments challenge the individualistic dogma of capitalism, their effects are ultimately negated.

For example, Anne-Marie is concerned with helping the poor – but equally concerned with ensuring her own welfare. One of the conditions under which she agrees to help Charlie is that she will be able to buy a new dress and shoes to impress potential parents, and she remains dissatisfied until Charlie takes her shopping. When she meets the couple who eventually adopt her, she even introduces herself explicitly in terms of these possessions: "My name is Anne-Marie. I'm getting a new dress!" Her selfish impulses are made most obvious when she visits the couple's home. Anne-Marie comments that it "is the most beautiful house [she] has ever seen" and subsequently tells Charlie that "Harold and Kate are really wonderful [because] they gave me real waffles with butter and syrup." Clearly – albeit surprisingly – Anne-Marie evaluates these characters in terms of the material benefits they can provide her; even she cannot escape the consumerist ideology that undergirds her culture.

Less surprising, perhaps, is that Charlie's reading of *Robin Hood* is patently capitalistic. Itchy's responses to the story demonstrate how deeply ingrained this ideology is: "Hey, Boss, where do you get that stuff? What kind of Hood is this guy – giving to the poor without taking his cut?... This Hood guy's out fifty percent." Moreover, Charlie tells this story while actually holding Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. This substitution demonstrates that there is no room in Charlie's world for the egalitarian ideals of Robin Hood. Indeed, there is no room in



any of the characters' worlds for such ideas: even the puppies who affirm the importance of sharing immediately reject these very principles when they dive with selfish voracity into a cake that Charlie brings them.

These complexities make it difficult to draw conclusions about the agendas advanced in *All Dogs Go to Heaven*. To interpret the film as a protest against capitalist materialism would be a mistake; it contains too many affirmations of the *status quo* to contend that director Bluth intended to critique the American economic system. Similarly, to interpret the film as a feminist project celebrating essentialist female morality would be too simplistic. Although her morality does give her some power as the film's redemptive agent, Anne-Marie ultimately accepts her role in patriarchy: she opts for a pink feather bed in a homogenous subdivision instead of a pillow in the back of an abandoned car, even though the latter might more effectively enable her to "change society in a beneficial direction" (Kaplan 9).

This intricacy complicates the project of interpretation, but it does not ultimately preclude conclusions. Because *All Dogs Go to Heaven* relies so heavily on American mythic themes, it is an excellent example of how "films reflect in a deceptively effortless way the nightmare and dream imagery which is part of our aesthetic and cultural heritage" (Sobchack 291-2). This film is more than a simple children's story; it is an exploration of the fundamental components of a complex, sometimes contradictory, ideology. Like much American art, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*

both covertly and overtly [confronts] the tensions inherent in our concept of personal success and its paradoxical suspension of two contradictory impulses – one democratic, ethical, social, and work-oriented, the other elitist, pragmatic, individualistic, and reward-oriented. (Sobchack 291)

The manifestations of these tensions in the film are numerous. Charlie, the underdog, wrestles constantly with his greed and his impulse to help others – a conflict that is resolved only when he sacrifices himself to save his female companion. Even ethical Anne-Marie struggles to reconcile her concern for others with her contradictory desire for a home of her own. Although the

film may leave viewers comfortable with its conclusion, it is hardly a "happy ending." Yes, Charlie is ostensibly redeemed by Anne-Marie's essentialist female morality, and yes, Anne-Marie finds a home, but this resolution merely affirms the hegemony of capitalist ideology.

Charlie's reformation is not only moral – it has an economic dimension as well. When he saves Anne-Marie's life by sacrificing his own, Charlie rejects the individualism that once governed his behavior and led him to proclaim that "the only way [he] knows to finish is to finish first." This impulse, of course, is vital for the capitalist economic system to function; without the desire for individual material gain to drive it, capitalism fails. Charlie's implicit rejection of this ideology in favor of a more selfless one therefore renders him useless to a capitalist society, and as a result, he dies. Moreover, even though Anne-Marie embodies the essentialist qualities that might enable her to challenge patriarchal institutions, she ultimately rejects those characteristics in favor of a life in suburban America, where women are given the power only to cook waffles. Because her new lifestyle fits within an androcentric framework, Anne-Marie not only lives but prospers. These very different conclusions send a clear message: *to live in America, you must accept its dominant ideology*.

Thus, it seems that *All Dogs Go to Heaven* does not meaningfully critique American capitalist society or its concomitant ideology. Instead, this film, like all "signifying systems, [is a] human creation which [reflects] the attitudes of [its] creator... [and] necessarily involves an interpretation of reality and implies certain values" (Gaggi 463). In this case, those values are the ones necessary for the success of capitalism: individualism, materialism, and consumerism. It seems that this film adequately fulfills "its role as a conveyor of ideology within the class struggle" (462).

This authentication of capitalist hegemony is particularly problematic in light of the film's self-consciousness and context. *All Dogs Go to Heaven* clearly illuminates socioeconomic tensions – Charlie's reinterpretation of the tale of Robin Hood; his pleas for the impoverished puppies to share their pizza – which demonstrates that its creators recognize the problems of inequality. But their position of discursive

authority, from which they can potentially advocate change, is undermined by their decision to affirm the values of capitalism; apparently, the stranglehold of dominant ideology is inescapable. Perhaps the most unnerving consequence of this hegemony is that this film has been marketed primarily to children and has therefore helped to create a generation indoctrinated by the unquestioning acceptance of prescribed values. *All Dogs Go to Heaven* ultimately affirms that a "good dog" is a complacent dog – and, as Charlie observes, "you can't keep a good dog down."

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Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* is an unusual film for a number of reasons. The film is powerfully controversial in its choice of subject matter – a television show that re-enacts the tradition of the minstrelsy, blackface and all – and critically complex for its metacritical nature as a filmic satire that is chiefly “about” a satire created by its main character. It is unsurprising, given this complexity, that *Bamboozled* had a rather small theatrical run and received very mixed, and often very negative, reviews. Critical commentary, while necessarily more patient with the film than popular reviews, is similarly mixed. As one author participating in a “critical symposium” on the film published in *Cineaste* only months after its release writes, “*Bamboozled* is an extremely complex film, one that demands careful viewing(s), and speaks to its various audiences in a number of ways” (Davis 16). Indeed, the film all at once grapples with issues of media, advertisement, popular culture, racial identity, racial subculture, cultural appropriation, and more, such that it becomes difficult to know the best or most inclusive angle from which to approach it.

*Bamboozled*'s opening sequence offers a vital clue to understanding its overarching structure, and one way in which these issues can be understood together. In the first words spoken in the film, the main character and effective narrator – Pierre Delacroix – reads a dictionary definition of “satire.” In the story that follows, Pierre creates a professedly “satiric” television show (*The Mantan Show*), which becomes the film's central subject. In this paper, I intend first to look at *Bamboozled* from this angle, as a satire about a satire, with special attention to satire as a “masking” process. As John R. Clark writes in his essay “Vapid Voices and Sleazy Styles,” the satirist often “dons a mask, adopts an alien voice or antic pose” in order to best criticize his target (Clark 21). This often means that the satirist masquerades as the very subject he

intends to ridicule. For *Bamboozled*, the issue of the satiric “mask” is particularly important in a number of ways. Satiric maskings in the film occur in many different contexts and on many different layers. These successive maskings have everything to do with the film's articulation of its key concerns: first, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing a true sense of racial identity in a postmodern world that is so highly masked, and referential, and second, the dangerous ways in which that society empties historically significant signs of their meaning, presenting them under the guise of benign entertainment and consumer product.

To begin with, I intend to look at the main character of the film – Pierre Delacroix – as a character who operates under a series of masks. Looking at this first, outermost layer of the film's masking process reveals the aspects of Pierre's persona that Lee is satirizing – which are, ironically enough, his own masking and masquerading behaviors. These behaviors define and structure the concerns of the rest of the film. The next critical layer of masking is the mask which Pierre creates for himself as a satirist within the film: his *Mantan Show*. *The Mantan Show* can be read, as Pierre proposes in calling it a satire, as a satiric attack on the masked (in blackface) persona through which it speaks, and on the history of the minstrel show itself. However, what is most important in looking at *The Mantan Show* is the ways in which Spike Lee – as the authorial voice behind the mask of Pierre Delacroix – complicates this goal. In particular, Lee uses numerous motifs and stylistic elements to underscore the show's failure to articulate such a critique effectively as it interacts with and is received by the “real world” within the film, and the ultimate dangers of this failure. Among other things, *The Mantan Show* becomes caught up in economic concerns of consumerism and entertainment, such that the satiric mask itself is the thing being consumed. The following narrative (and all of its negative fallout) can be read as an aftermath of this, and this process of consumption and designification thus takes shape as one more of the main overarching satiric targets of *Bamboozled*. This ultimately brings us full-circle to the issues that structure Pierre's initial dilemma – the articulation of racial identity in a postmodern



world which, as the rest of the narrative goes to show, corrupts and manipulates race as a sign system, due to the way in which a consumer-oriented society interacts with that racial sign.

As previously mentioned, Pierre Delacroix is the narrator of *Bamboozled* from start to finish, and in fact, his words are both the first and the last that we hear in the film. The question of masking applies to Delacroix in two ways, the first of these relating directly to his role as narrator of the film. Delacroix's opening narration begins with a dictionary definition of "satire," reminding us rather overtly that the film we are about to see is, itself, a work of satire. As John R. Clark asserts, "What the satirist does frequently and does well is to adopt the tone and character of his victims" (Clark 23). In particular, satirists often adopt the tone and character of their victims through the creation of "self-damning narrators," a type best exemplified by Swift's classic character, Gulliver from *Gulliver's Travels*. This type of narrator stands between the author and reader (or filmmaker and viewer) as an intermediary mask, which the satirist can implicitly (or explicitly) poke fun at for its various absurdities, mannerisms, and viewpoints. In the case of the classic Gulliver, for example, Gulliver's blind patriotism, classism, and gullibility are all traits which are intended to come across to the reader as absurd, laughable, or reprehensible. In the case of *Bamboozled*, the chief trait being satirized in the masking narrator of Pierre Delacroix is, ironically enough, the various masquerades Pierre creates in his own life. Specifically, Pierre wears a number of "masks" in his life to confuse and obscure his racial identity, and as is implied throughout the narrative, to disassociate himself from black racial identity, so that he can more easily maneuver in the white corporate world he lives and works in. This obscuring of his "blackness" is something that many other characters directly criticize Pierre for. It is what constantly allows his white boss, Dunwitty, to claim he is "blacker" than Pierre. It is what his assistant, Sloan Hopkins, subtly mocks in a board meeting later in the film, commenting that Pierre is "not black; he's a Negro."

As Cristy Tondeur writes, "Dela shapes his appearance and personality to defy racial expectations. As the

movie opens, Dela is shown shaving his head and speaking with an obscure accent that renders his cultural background indiscernible" (Tondeur 4). Delacroix's racial masquerade is indeed evident from the film's very first scene, and manifests itself across the film in a number of ways. His stiff and stilted manner of speech, which another critic describes as an "odd Grace-Kelly-meets-James-Earl-Jones accent" (Lucia 10), is undeniably over the top. Not only does this render Pierre's cultural background unclear, as Tondeur suggests, but it also implies – through both vocabulary and diction – a level of pretension and feigned intellectuality that necessarily sounds ridiculous. Again, other characters (for example, Dunwitty, Womack, and even Pierre's father) at many points in the film directly mock his speech. Pierre's racial masquerade is perhaps most directly apparent in his name, which we learn later in the film has been changed from "Peerless Dothan" to the French-sounding "Pierre Delacroix" – a particularly arbitrary and, given the stereotypical associations given to French culture, intellectually pretentious change.

By presenting us with a narrator whose absurdities are so over the top (Damon Wayans is often criticized for overacting his role as Pierre), and are directly called into question by numerous characters within the film, Lee necessarily frames the audience's critical attention toward those absurdities. In other words, Pierre, as the narrator who is self-damning by virtue of his extensive racial masquerade, necessarily establishes this subject of "masquerading" as one of *Bamboozled*'s chief satiric targets. It is important to note that it is not only Pierre who participates in masquerading behavior in the first half of the film. Perhaps the most obviously masquerading character, next to Pierre, is his boss, Dunwitty. Dunwitty's absurd behavior takes an opposite form to Pierre's, as a white man putting on what he perceives as "black" speech and appearances. If Pierre's dialect is overly restrained and intellectual, then Dunwitty's goes to the other extreme: overly (and intentionally) crass and colloquial. Dunwitty makes abundant use of (usually outdated) slang that he perceives as "black" – "dope," "ill," "get jiggy," "keepin' it real" – and prides himself on the pictures of "brothers" on his office walls and on his marriage to a black woman. In



conversations between Pierre and his boss, this mutually masquerading behavior has quite uniquely reversed the racial dynamic in terms of who has claim to the labels of "black" and "white." When Dunwitty says that Pierre's writing is too "white bread," and that he has more claim to the word "nigger" than Pierre, he has justification for these seemingly contradictory arguments in the outward signifying behavior of each. (For example, in another scene, Dunwitty challenges Pierre to identify a black athlete pictured on his office wall. When Pierre cannot name this, albeit very superficial, signifier of racial identification, Dunwitty considers his point proven – that he is "blacker" than Pierre.) In this way, masquerading behavior of the sort Pierre engages in is constructed, within the first few scenes of the film, as absurd and capable of creating certain logical inversions, so much so that a white man can construct a seemingly logical argument – based on outward signifiers, the masks that each wears – that he is "blacker" than Pierre.

It is also important to note that in one of these early scenes, Lee also implies a certain amount of danger to Pierre's masked behavior: that it entails a certain amount of repression, of anger in particular. In the aforementioned scene where Dunwitty lays claim to the word "nigger," we momentarily see Pierre jump out of his seat and assault his boss, screaming "whitey, whitey, whitey." The outburst is promptly revealed to be only Pierre's fantasy, as the next cut shows Dunwitty sitting smug again, but Lee's point here is clear. Though Pierre projects a very composed exterior and attempts a freedom from racial labels, beneath this veneer there lurks a strong resentment of the racial game, which threatens to emerge violently. This is crucial in how the film transitions its to larger issues of racial labeling, masking, and signifying, as the implications will eventually be the same on a larger cultural level.

Pierre's creation of *Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show* entails the creation of a new mask in several regards. Perhaps the most intentional of these is the creation of a satiric mask. Pierre intends the show to function as a satire, which he describes to Sloan as "so negative, so offensive and racist; hence, I will prove my point." For Pierre, this "point" is

that the network is not willing to air shows starring black people unless those characters are portrayed as buffoons. In accordance with classic satiric theory, and with the masking theory described by Clark, Pierre intends to masquerade behind that very practice – a show all about buffoonery by black characters – to call it into criticism. This satiric aim is, at least, Pierre's intention. As we will see, the film goes on to undercut this intention, and demonstrate the terrible failure of the show to really communicate its criticism of the negative art form in which it engages.

The *Mantan* show is not only a mask in this conceptual satiric sense. There are numerous other maskings at work in the *Mantan* show. The most obvious of these is the literal application of blackface, worn by all of the show's black performers. The mask created by blackface is essentially at the core of the film's relation to the powerful issues of race and racism. As will be discussed later, the mask of blackface is a sign that carries powerful, historically significant meaning with it, and this is a consequence that, as the film progresses, can be ignored less and less. With regards to the act of masking, the show requires its performers to engage in its masquerade by literally putting on the mask of blackface. This act, like Pierre's daily masquerades, is constructed as clearly absurd not only for the strangeness of a "black" actor wearing black face (a complicated issue of signification and the meaning of the term "black" as a racial label), but also for the ignorance of that significant historical consequence that such an act implies. Manray and Womack are furthermore asked to mask themselves in another way, by changing their names to "Mantan" and "Sleep'n Eat." The parallel to Pierre Delacroix's name change should not be overlooked. Here two more black characters are asked to change their name – as Pierre has done – and the effect is also a racially related one, although for Pierre his name change entails a *denial* of his racial background, while for Manray and Womack, the name change entails a participation in a historical attack on their racial background, in the legacy of racism represented by the minstrel show. Of course, the hook and the enticement for these characters to participate in the masquerade of the show is a matter of money and success. In the opening scenes,



"making it" is established as a powerful central desire for both Manray and Womack, and their economic situation (very poor, and just having been run out of their apartment, no less) leaves them hard pressed for any help they can find. Thus their participation in the masking behavior is coerced and, as will be discussed later, ultimately bound by these desires (for success and money) and virtually impossible to escape.

Furthermore, and perhaps most interestingly, the filmmakers directly utilize elements of film style to establish the show as a "masked" entity, creating a distinction between the high production value of the show and the comparatively unmediated nature of the narrative "real world." As Spike Lee has explained in numerous interviews, and as Zeinabu Irene Davis explains in her essay, "Spike Lee and director of photography Ellen Kuras combined traditional film stocks with digital video to create a unique look and mood" (Davis 16). Specifically, the filmmakers use digital video for every scene in the film *except* for those scenes intended play as part of the *Mantan* show. The result is a look for the show that is significantly more polished, refined, and in line with Hollywood norms, while actions that play out in the "real world" of the narrative appear much grittier and amateur by comparison. Other devices, particularly framing and lighting, also reinforce this effect. The result is the creation of a continuum, wherein the most "real" of scenes – for example, the scene that introduces Manray and Womack, or the conversations between Manray and Sloan – seem to be the ones in which the most devices of traditional film style are discarded. These scenes are often done with hand-held camera work, unconventional or random compositions, very wide shots, or occasional out of place zooms. As it relates to the theme of masking in the film, the connection is fairly literal, but creates a sweeping allegory across the film. The *Mantan* show is, by contrast with the "real world" scenes, a world of style before substance, where the conventional norms of Hollywood entertainment are applied true to form – a world that is decidedly masked, to meet the demands of popular, consumer-driven entertainment.

With these devices set in place and the *Mantan* show established as a distinct "mask," the film proceeds in its second

half (following *Mantan*'s premiere in the narrative world) to undercut that mask and suggest that the historical and racist associations (the actual meanings) that lie beneath it are too significant and too negative, to remain hidden beneath the mask without consequence. This is a message that is present from the very beginning; Pierre and the others know from the outset that blackface and the minstrelsy are part of a dangerous tradition. Pierre's initial conception is of a "negative, offensive, racist" show. Womack objects strongly during the initial pitch to Dunwitty at the very mention of blackface. Sloan objects to the initial proposal, saying the show is too risky, and objects multiple times during the initial pitch to Dunwitty. However, these objections are all ignored, and the show is produced regardless. Yet, from the *Mantan* show's premiere all the way through to the end of the film, the historical significance of the blackface minstrel "mask" is portrayed as lurking dangerously beneath that mask, ever threatening to break out violently – as it does in the end.

Again, this message is reinforced through a number of narrative and stylistic motifs. The most direct and consistent reminders of the historical significance and consequences of the minstrel tradition come from Sloan. At four different points in the film, Sloan presents direct artifacts of that minstrel tradition to other characters. The first is the portfolio of posters and images from early minstrel acts, which she gives to Womack and Manray in discussing their roles with them before the show goes into production. The second is the "jolly nigger bank" she gives as a gift to Pierre. Third, she gives a similar gift, a dancing blackface doll, to Manray after Pierre has fired her. The final of Sloan's artifacts is the video tape she leaves on Pierre's desk, which is given special prominence in its place at the very end of the film. Sloan's intentions in unearthing these artifacts is consistent. As she says in presenting the "jolly nigger bank" to Pierre, her goal is to remind the others working on the show "of a time in our history, in this country, when we were considered inferior, and subhuman." For Sloan, the signifiers of blackface and the minstrelsy cannot, and should not, be separated from their original signified concept: the subjugation of blacks.



Sloan's position is one that stands in direct contradiction to the way that the "face" of the show is processed, packaged, and consumed as an object of popular culture and entertainment. The *Mantan* show becomes an icon and item of popular consumption, a point which is made clearest in the montage halfway through the film, where images from *Mantan* are displayed alongside images of historically popular entertainment icons like the hula hoop, yoyos, pet rocks, beanie babies, and Pokemon. Over this montage, Pierre narrates, "The latest, hottest, newest sensation across the nation was: blackface!" Recalling the notion of the *Mantan* show, and "blackface" in particular, as a part of a theme of masking in the film, Pierre's narration in this scene emphasizes that what the public has consumed and is most enamored with about the show is its face – its mask, certainly not the historical signified of that mask that Sloan's artifacts recall. This process, the emptying of historical context and significance from a sign, is one that arises, at least in the narrative of *Bamboozled* from a consumer- and media-based culture. As Greg Tate summarizes, "What Lee eloquently reminds us of in *Bamboozled* is the degree to which the dehumanization and commodification of Africans that occurred during slavery lingers on as a fetish in American entertainment ... blackness remains a commodity to be traded on whatever auction block will have it – whether the corporate board room or the TV sound stage" (Tate 15). This aspect of popular entertainment, as Tate and others suggest, is one of Lee's biggest satiric targets in the film. By portraying this commodification of the mask of blackness to the extreme that it does (to the point where, in the aforementioned montage, children are wearing blackface masks for Halloween), *Bamboozled* calls that process into satiric criticism. Alongside and in contrast to this exaggerated commodification, then, Lee places the objections of characters like Sloane – reminders of the reality of the historical context that lurks beneath the apparently emptied signifier. The recurrence of such objections and reminders of the historical reality ultimately forms an undercurrent that builds a crescendo throughout the film to the finale, and is in large part what drives the film to its violent ending.

As previously mentioned, this undercurrent is emphasized through several motifs, the first of which is Sloan's repeated presentation of historical artifacts. Another of these motifs occurs in the film's use of music. As Davis suggests in her essay, the film's main musical theme is repeated at multiple times in the film, each time gaining significance in counterpoint to the superficial application and reception of the black mask of the *Mantan* show (Davis 17). This theme, every time it enters, seems to connote a moment of contemplation on the act of masking. It makes its first appearance in a scene between Sloan and her brother Julius (a.k.a. Big Blak Afrika) on the subject of his name change – an act of masking in his own life. It also plays beneath all three scenes of Manray and Womack applying blackface before the show. The act of applying blackface takes a visibly, successively greater psychological toll on the two in each of these scenes, and the music seems to parallel this growing sadness and toil associated with the masking act. Meanwhile, in each of these "blackening up" scenes, the sound of the waiting crowd's roar and Honeycutt's booming introduction grow louder on the soundtrack until they eventually overtake the musical theme – spectacle, masquerade, and entertainment overtaking contemplation in this transitional process. The theme also enters in a couple of scenes where Pierre and Sloan discuss the social implications of, and their commitment to, the show. The theme makes its final, and most powerful, appearances in the scene in which Womack finally opts out of the project, the final performance in which Manray also opts out, and in the final montage, where Sloan's video on the history of blackface plays alongside the image of the dying Pierre. In all of these scenes, the characters are being called to engage in some form of contemplative reflection on the act of masking, and in particular, on the otherwise-neglected historical significance of it. This is particularly true of the "blackening up" scenes, where Manray and Womack are literally at a crossroads of whether or not to apply their physical masks, and similarly in the scenes where each finally decides that he has donned his mask for the last time. (It is important to note, also, that in the scene in which Manray opts out of the production, not only does he go onstage without



blackface, but the filmmakers underscore this denial of the mask by shooting the ensuing performance in digital video, not with film.) This also holds true for the decision-making scenes between Sloan and Pierre, who are faced with the decision of whether or not to go through with the creation of the satiric mask. Even in Sloan's debate with Julius over his name change, the debate is fundamentally one over masking one's identity – along similar lines as Pierre's name change and general racial masquerade. These scenes crescendo in importance from the film's start to its finish, with the final scene of Pierre's death drawing the final violent consequences of the *Mantan* project in direct analogy with the history of blackface as played out on Sloan's video tape. A second, similar musical motif builds the threat of the show's eventual consequences in a more violent light. The Mau Mau's theme – a dark, heavy rap track – directly brings violence in the theme, eventually culminating in their abduction and murder of Manray.

As this undercurrent of historical significance and potential for violent consequence grows, it would of course seem wise for the characters involved in the show to abandon the "masquerade" of the show. However, *Bamboozled's* final and most damning point is that once the mask has become a cultural icon, and has become widely consumed as such – and furthermore has become tied to the characters' dreams of success and their monetary well-being – it becomes impossible for the characters involved in the show to extricate themselves from the mask. Womack and Manray are eventually able to do so, but only at significant costs and difficulties. Womack must sacrifice his best friendship in leaving the show, and Manray, while he does effectively quit the show in the end as well, has become too closely associated with the blackface mask in the public eye to avoid his abduction and murder by the Mau Maus. For Pierre, the case is different. Perhaps due to his creationary role in the masquerade, or due to his own previously-established, deep-seated personal issues with racial masking, he is ultimately and tragically unable to get out from behind the mask he has created for himself. Multiple shots near the end of the film position Pierre in the frame with an icon of blackface between

himself and the object of his conversation – the most notable of these scenes being his final phone conversation with his mother, and his argument with Manray after firing Sloan (see figs. 1-4, attached). The blackface images in these shots establish a literal barrier – a mask – between Pierre and the people he interacts with. This point is driven home in the final scenes, as from the moment of Manray's death through the end of the film, Pierre is inexplicably wearing blackface himself. The mask, of blackface, that he has created and projected into the public sphere of entertainment has now literally become part of his own face – the face he will die wearing.

Ironically enough, the face Pierre is stuck with at his death is, as a profoundly negative and racist label of black identity, the very thing Pierre sought to avoid with his initial daily masquerade as "Pierre Delacroix" rather than "Peerless Dothan." In this way, the issue of masking comes full circle in the film, connecting Pierre's initial concern over racial identification with the terrible aftermath of the satiric "mask" he has created in the *Mantan* show. In this way, the film's satiric targets encompass both the daily, comical masquerades of Pierre Delacroix, as well as the broad cultural process by which consumer-oriented media in postmodern society can empty important signifiers of their meanings for the purpose of entertainment – and the dangers of both processes. These targets are ultimately both unified under the film's overarching theme of masking. In the case of the *Mantan* show, the issue is a widespread cultural ignorance of the substance behind the mask (behind the sign), a substance which characters like Sloan try, and ultimately fail, to remind Pierre and others of throughout the film. It is in light of these themes that the film's final image – the smiling, masked face of "Mantan" – takes on such terrible significance. Though the mask is smiling, and the laugh track roaring beneath it at Pierre's dying request, the truth of the narrative has revealed that beneath that mask lurks a great deal of cultural, racial, and historical significance (exemplified by the final roll of Sloan's video tape), the ignorance of which can have devastating consequences.





Fig 1: Manray addresses Pierre from  
Behind a cutout of his "Mantan" persona

Fig 2: Pierre addresses  
a cutout of "Sleep 'n Eat"

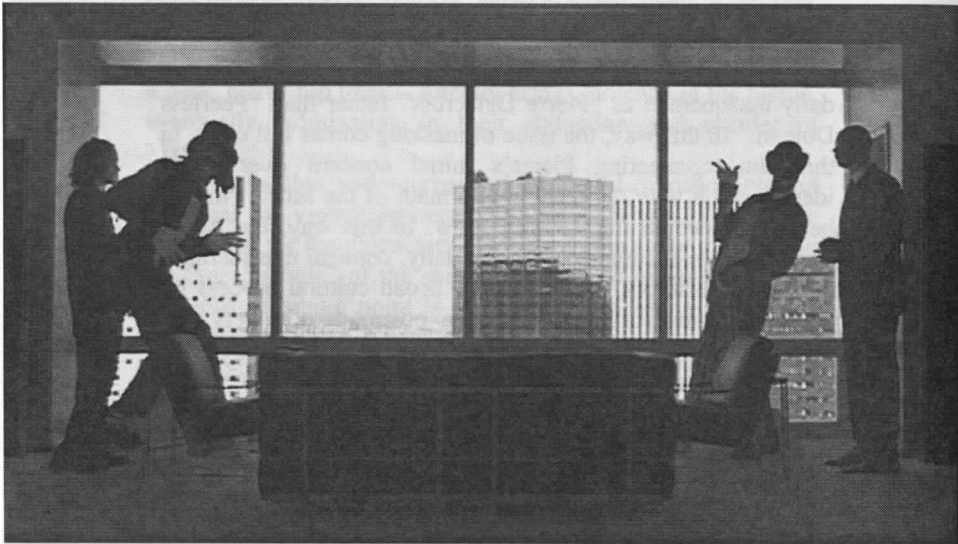


Fig 4 (below): Pierre on the phone with his mother, his line of sight and  
conversation interrupted by the blackface figure in front of his face.



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*"Peculiar Quavers, Fearful Pleasures": Reading toward a  
Queer(er) Crane and a Queer(er) Canon*

Emily Toler '08

A nation's literature documents its self-imaginings, its self-definitions. Taken as a whole, the body of American literary texts, encompassing both the most arcane chapbook of poetry and the most wildly popular novel of the day, dialectically reflects and influences the broad range of American experiences. Any modern-day Tocqueville wanting to assay the range of ideas and values of the American people would do well to survey its literature, including its most revered and most reviled, its most canonized and most marginalized texts. American literature provides a lens nonpareil through which one can begin to understand America.

David S. Goldstein

Goldstein's observations about the American canon are accurate, and initially, they paint a pleasant picture of American's literary tradition. It is comforting to imagine that our canon represents the incredible diversity of American experiences. It is comforting to imagine that recent reevaluations of the canon have prompted the inclusion of writers previously been denied their places in literary history. It is comforting to imagine that we have adequately expanded and complicated the canon. This, however, is not the case.

In its infancy, the American canon accurately reflected the population it purported to represent: it was limited almost exclusively to white, wealthy males who were

largely preoccupied with establishing a credible, distinctive national literature. One of the most important voices to emerge from this budding literary chorus was that of Washington Irving, whose *The Sketch Book* has long been recognized as one of the most important early canonical texts. Because his work played such an important role in legitimating American authors and their works, and because his thematic and technical influence has been so profound, Irving's position in the canon is virtually uncontested. Therefore, the stories of *The Sketch Book*—especially its most famous, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"—are a useful lens through which to identify and analyze the characteristics of the canon.

Studying American literature today, however, is a wholly different enterprise than studying American literature two centuries ago. The community of American authors is far more diverse than ever before, populated by writers of multitudinous ethnicities, genders, religions, social classes, and sexualities. But even as the literary field has expanded, the canon has remained strangely unchanged. The voices of minorities and the marginalized continue to be tragically underrepresented, and many anthologies of American literature are still conspicuously devoid of these groups. It seems grossly hypocritical to continue affirming a homogenous canon in a nation so indisputably diverse, so many critics have challenged this intellectual stagnation.

For example, in her essay "Melodramas of Beset Manhood," Nina Baym addresses the problem of canon formation, observing that American authors have long been subjected to "a standard of Americanness" (589) that establishes certain criteria by which their work will be judged. These authors must focus on "America as a nation," highlighting the experiences and characters that are unique to America and form the mythologized "American experience" (591). Although her essay argues for the inclusion of women writers in the canon, its principles can be applied with equal legitimacy to queer criticism. The canon determines what texts can be studied and in what contexts that study can take place, and because it has given priority to white male writers and their concomitant ideological agendas and biases, it has



left little room for “subversive” readings. Such restrictions prevent us from illuminating the feminist, homosexual, or otherwise “atypical” characteristics of our canonical literature, and as a result, our understanding of “Americanness” has been dreadfully limited. But as postmodern theories have complicated how we understand our position in and relate to the world, the canon has been opened to a variety of new perspectives. One of the most valuable possibilities that this nascent expansion has enabled is to find evidence of the subversive in conventional American texts.

In this essay, I will do precisely that, arguing for the recognition of the queer in Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” First, I illuminate the textual and contextual evidence that Ichabod Crane is a queer character. I propose that he is not merely inadequately masculine, as many critics have already observed, but that he is also undeniably feminine, and that this double identity problematizes traditional interpretations of the text. Next, I consider the implications of Ichabod’s queerness for contemporary American literature and criticism, ultimately suggesting that the story’s position in the canon compels us to reimagine that canon in radical new ways.

Something about Ichabod Crane is simply queer. Even the first descriptions Irving gives of the schoolmaster indicate that Ichabod is by no means the “ideal” American male:

He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock perched upon his spindle neck to tell which way the wind blew. (1356)

Certainly, this description is comical, but it is also quite important. Irving makes it clear that Ichabod looks odd—that is, queer—and his subsequent narrative technique suggests that appearance is an appropriate lens through which to analyze a character. Consider, for example, Katrina Van

Tassel. She is “a blooming lass of fresh eighteen; plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father’s peaches” (1359). This food imagery evokes her youth, her femininity, and her fertility; Katrina is clearly ripe for the picking. More importantly, Irving indicates that we might accurately evaluate her by her appearance, writing that “she was withal a little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress [which included] a provokingly short petticoat, to display the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round” (1359). The association of physical attributes with fundamental character traits is thus established—an important connection that prepares us to distinguish Ichabod Crane from his hypermasculine antithesis, Brom Bones.

Brom embodies virtually every quality typically associated with masculinity and power. Even his given name, Abraham, connotes male authority and tradition; the biblical Abraham, of course, is the paradigmatic patriarch, the root of the 12 tribes of Israel, and Brom seems more than capable of fulfilling a similar role. He is “a burly, roaring, roistering blade... [a] hero of the country round,” and these attributes are manifested in his appearance: “he was broad-shouldered, and double-jointed... [with a] Herculean frame and great powers of limb” (1361). Sleepy Hollow “[rings] with his feats of strength and hardihood” (1361), suggesting that its inhabitants assign great value to masculinity and, therefore, may be suspicious of a male as slight as Ichabod Crane.

Aware that the town will judge him by the same criteria applied to Brom Bones, and that the resulting assessment will likely determine his fate in Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod attempts to highlight the few “manly” traits he possesses. To command respect from his students, Ichabod speaks in an “authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command” (1356) and is hardly averse to doling out punishment. His particular style of justice, however, is skewed in favor of the frail: “your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some little, tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin” (1361). Ichabod clearly empathizes with the feeble—an affinity rooted in his



identification with the weaker students. Moreover, the fact that he does not simply spare the weak but doubly punishes the strong indicates that he may be hostile to the images of masculinity with which he is unceasingly besieged. That Ichabod's desire for justice is "satisfied" by this distinctively unjust punishment further underscores his queerness: both Ichabod's desires and the ways he realizes them are somehow peculiar.

These attempts to demonstrate his manhood are at least marginally successful, insofar as the townspeople do not ostracize Ichabod for failing to meet their standards of masculinity. This mere acceptance, however, never rivals the reverence the town feels for Brom Bones, and it is largely contingent on Ichabod's contributions to society. Because his salary as a teacher is insufficient to feed his enormous appetite, Ichabod lives as an itinerant lodger among the people of Sleepy Hollow. (It is worth noting that this inability to support himself undermines his pretensions to masculinity: instead of assuming the (male) role of provider, Ichabod must become the (female) one who is provided for.) To repay the debts he owes to the agrarian families who house and feed him, he "assists [them] occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms" (1357). The tasks that he performs, however, are hardly those befitting a man. Instead, he "[becomes] wonderfully gentle and ingratiating... petting the children, particularly the youngest; and... [sits] with a child on one knee, [rocking] a cradle with his foot for whole hours together" (1357). That the townspeople consistently appropriate these particular chores to Ichabod—and, more importantly, that he actually agrees to fulfill them—suggests that something in his nature is distinctly feminine.

This latent femininity is apparent in Ichabod's other interests, most notably his vocation as the "singing-master of the neighborhood" (1357). Ichabod's sensibilities certainly befit such a feminine profession: singing "[is] a matter of no little vanity to him" (1357). Because vanity is a charge traditionally leveled against women, it is not difficult to interpret Ichabod's vain interest in singing as a feminine one. Even more tellingly, the "peculiar quavers" (1357) of his voice still linger in the church at Sleepy Hollow. Irving's

explicit identification of something "peculiar" about Ichabod is significant because it suggests that interpreting this character in a queer framework is a valid—and necessary—critical enterprise.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestations of Ichabod's queerness are his interactions with women. The other male characters of the story are largely wary of the fairer sex and view them only as possessions, constantly "keeping a watchful and angry eye on each other, ready to fly out... against any new competitor" (1361), but Ichabod cultivates intimate, if ironically nonsexual, relationships with women. He is

*peculiarly* [emphasis mine] happy in the smiles of all the country damsels... gathering grapes for them... or reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering with a whole bevy of them, along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond. (1358)

Ichabod's behavior is peculiar because it is so dramatically different from the behavior of the other men, who "[hang] sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address" (1358). Instead of fraternizing with the men, Ichabod has become *one of the girls*.

Indeed, Ichabod spends most of his time engaging in traditionally feminine activities with women. He is the town's "traveling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house" (1358). This penchant for idle chatter hardly seems appropriate for a man, but it helps Ichabod to solidify his position in the community: he is "esteemed by the women" not only because he is a source of news, but also because he "most firmly and potently [believes]" (1359) the stories of witchcraft that his female companions discuss. Irving clearly indicates that this behavior is atypical of a man, describing Ichabod's hobby of "[passing] long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives" as a "fearful pleasure" (1359). These pleasures are "fearful" because they are associated with femininity: women, not men, are traditionally depicted as susceptible to superstition and romance, and the fact that



Ichabod enjoys these activities clearly indicates that he is more than marginally feminine.

This quality helps to explain why Ichabod's dealings with women are completely devoid of sexual desire. In his description of the anxieties present in Irving's text, Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky is right to observe that Ichabod "makes no gestures that would indicate his fitness as Katrina Van Tassel's mate... [because] his sexuality is severely in doubt; the pedagogue channels all his erotic energy into the act of eating" (517). Although Irving never explicitly states that Ichabod's interests are gastric rather than sexual, the implication is clear. Ichabod characterizes Katrina as a "tempting morsel" who attracts his interest only "after he had visited her in her paternal mansion" (1359). That she should arouse the schoolmaster's interest is not surprising; Van Tassel's farm is productive, and his home is full of the sumptuous food that Ichabod perpetually craves.

In fact, Ichabod's desire for sustenance completely replaces his desire for sex. He thinks of Katrina only in conjunction with food: "his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children, mounted on the top of a wagon loaded household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath" (1360). Ichabod may be dreaming of his progeny, but he does so only in a context that emphasizes "pots and kettles" over "a whole family of children." Moreover, Katrina's subsequent rejection of Ichabod proves that his domestic reveries can be no more than unrealized fantasies.

The failure of Ichabod's relationship with Katrina is the definitive example of his queerness. Because he knows that he must compete with Brom Bones for the affections of the elusive coquette, he realizes that he cannot possibly win her heart if he pursues her through traditional methods of masculine courtship. Therefore, he "makes his advances in a quiet and gently insinuating manner" (1362); that is, he pursues Katrina in the way a woman might pursue a lover (at least according to androcentric constructions of femininity). Additionally, when he hears of the dance that Van Tassel will be hosting, Ichabod uses distinctly feminine tactics in his attempts to woo the heiress, spending "at least an extra half-

hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his looks by a bit of broken looking-glass, that hung up in the school-house" (1364). It is acceptable—even expected—for the women of Sleepy Hollow to devote such attention to their appearances when engaged in romantic pursuits, but this is intolerable behavior for a man. Thus, because Ichabod's attempts at courtship are insufficiently masculine, they fail: Katrina rejects his advances, and the über-manly, decidedly *Bromlike*, Headless Horseman drives him out of Sleepy Hollow.

Such a conclusion might suggest that Ichabod is banished because he is queer, but that does not seem to be the case. In an article discussing Irving's critique of American culture, Donald Ringe observes that the author "[affirms] a stable society that places its emphasis on order, tradition, and the family values that accompany social stability" (459). It seems that a character like Ichabod Crane directly threatens this sort of order; he does exhibit more feminine qualities than masculine ones, complicating traditional gender roles and distinctions. But instead of ostracizing him, the people of Sleepy Hollow embrace their queer neighbor. He has "ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable... [getting] on tolerably enough [with] all" (1357, 1358) and is "a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood... esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition" (1358). He is openly embraced by the female citizenry, and because he poses no amorous or physical threat to the men of the town, they too accept his presence. Ichabod's queerness does not endanger the "order, tradition, [or] family values" (Ringe 459) of Sleepy Hollow, so a socio-ethical threat cannot be the reason he is ultimately banished. Indeed, there is another explanation: Ichabod's materialism.

Ichabod is undoubtedly preoccupied with wealth; even his love for food does not transcend his love for material possessions. As he "[rolls] his great green eyes over [Van Tassel's] fat meadow-lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchard burdened with ruddy fruit" (1360), he cannot help but consider the fiscal benefits that marrying the farmer's daughter will entail:



His heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle palaces in the wilderness. (1360)

It is this desire for material gain that ultimately compels the townspeople to drive Ichabod away. At Van Tassel's dance, he makes his final attempt to win Katrina, but, distracted by the farmer's spread, he cannot conceal his selfishness and indulges himself in "[doing] ample justice to every dainty" (1366). These selfish aspirations mark him as anathema to Katrina and Sleepy Hollow, and the community exiles him for his materialism. This punishment "pleads in effect for the values of the settler and conserver over those of the speculator" (Ringe 463) and suggests that it is Ichabod's acquisitiveness—not his queerness—that the town fears most.

Ichabod's eventual fate further supports this contention: he is "admitted to the bar, turn[s] politician, electioneer[s], writ[es] for the newspapers, and [is] finally made a justice of the Ten Pound Court" (1372). Ichabod manages all of these things without marrying, achieving social respectability without acquiescing to normative constructions. Moreover, his legacy in Sleepy Hollow is not negative; instead, he is remembered primarily as an amusing local myth.

Indeed, after the Headless Horseman drives Ichabod away, he becomes insignificant to the town: "As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him" (1372). That Irving equates Ichabod's bachelorhood with his finances is intriguing. The people of Sleepy Hollow are clearly anxious about the potential introduction of materialism into their society, but ironically, they are guilty of the same sin for which they condemn Ichabod. If the townspeople were truly not materialistic, then Ichabod's debts would be inconsequential, but they are only willing to dismiss the schoolmaster after they ensure that he has not negatively impacted their own livelihoods. The members of the community actually *are* materialistic, and to maintain the illusion that they are *not*, they must eradicate all traces of that characteristic from their society. Ichabod's

eagerness to pursue material gain threatens the people of Sleepy Hollow primarily because it forces them to acknowledge the same quality in themselves.

The community must eliminate the "undesirable" characteristics they embody before resuming the routines of their illusorily sanctimonious lives. This is intriguing, given that the people of Sleepy Hollow use Ichabod's marital status as a criterion for forgetting him. They must confirm his bachelorhood, a necessary function of his queerness, before his exile is complete; therefore, they implicitly acknowledge their possession of the qualities that led to it. That is, the people of Sleepy Hollow concede that they are—at least a little—queer.

In combination with contemporary literary theories, these insights provide new ways of thinking about American literature. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet*, these new ways of reading and the evidence that supports them can challenge "the canon regimentation that effaces... the intertext and the intersexed" (49). This critical insurrection has given rise to new—and significant—methodological and ideological questions. How can we open discussions of gender, which have so long relied on a binary division, to include a negotiable spectrum of possibilities? How can we open texts to more mutinous theories, reading them as investigations of the queer? Perhaps, even more fundamentally, we are forced to ask: *can we?* As traditional understandings of identification are complicated, however, an encouraging answer emerges: we not only *can*; we *must*!

This potential to reread texts is particularly significant when we apply it to "major" works of American literature. Irving's contribution to developing the canon can hardly be disputed. His writing played an instrumental role in legitimating the voices of American authors, simultaneously self-conscious and eager to prove their worth, to the rest of the literary world. This conflicted consciousness clearly weighed heavily on Irving. As Rubin-Dorsky observes, Irving had "the misfortune to be publishing *The Sketch Book* at a time of escalating demands on American authors to produce recognizably 'American' works" (508). This preoccupation profoundly affected the canon, requiring textual candidates to



reproduce, in Baym's words, "melodramas of beset manhood." In some ways, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is no exception; the story is largely driven by Ichabod's tenuous masculinity. But Irving does not seem to have been content with a character who simply fails to fulfill his role as Man. Instead, he created Ichabod, whose decidedly feminine traits complicate dualistic models of identification and introduce an undeniable queerness to the story and to the canon.

Irving's distinguished position in the American literary tradition lends tremendous weight to this observation. His techniques, tropes, and themes have become prototypical, adopted and adapted by writers of every era—and rightfully so. But the salience of his contributions does not insulate them against careful scrutiny; instead, contemporary writers are free to subject his techniques to reevaluation and modification. The same must be said about critical approaches to Irving's work. To continue using the same restrictive perspectives to analyze canonical texts is to be complicit in perpetuating the distorted ideologies that these texts and analytical methods implicitly espouse. This acquiescence renders us incapable of challenging obsolete socio-critical dogmata and precludes any reinterpretation of the canon.

Thus, a new understanding of the canon "by necessity involves [its] expansion... and a deliberate revision of traditional perspectives" (Ruoff and Ward 4). It requires an abolition of the "Eurocentric, male biases" that permeate American texts and a conscious effort to create "explanatory models that account for the multiple voices and experiences" (4) that have shaped the history of the United States—even if those voices have so far been silenced. This interpretive model is not innocent or devoid of its own particular motivations, but neither is it guilty of improperly imposing postmodern ideas on premodern texts. Such a condemnation assumes "one overarching master-canon of literature" and implicitly excludes the idea of "a plurality of canons... [or] an interaction between models of the canon" (Sedgwick 50). Therefore, it is not relevant to an investigation that seeks to correct those very misconceptions.

It is important to remember that these critical perspectives do not create texts; they only uncover what is already present in them. The abundant evidence that supports a queer interpretation of Ichabod Crane demonstrates that new ways of reading are not only valid but vital if we are to come to a more complicated, more complete, understanding of our literary and cultural heritage. If Goldstein is correct to observe that "a nation's literature documents its self-imaginings, its self-definitions... [and] dialectically reflects and influences the broad range of American experiences," then it follows that Ichabod is as much a paradigmatic figure as Brom. If we are obsessed with Brom's masculinity, we are obsessed with Ichabod's ambiguity; if we can believe in headless horsemen, we can believe in sexless schoolteachers; if we are willing to acknowledge the materialistic, we are willing to acknowledge the queer.

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" undoubtedly deserves its traditional inclusion in the canon, but understanding Ichabod Crane's queerness ironically necessitates a radical reinterpretation of that canon. We must no longer imagine American literature as a homogenous monolith; we must acknowledge its syncretism and complexity, its masculine and feminine and interstitial possibilities, its spoken and unspoken, its pastiness and vivid color, its normative and its queer. Because Ichabod, one of the most famous characters in the American literary tradition, is clearly queer, it seems almost redundant to argue for a queering of the canon. The canon is already queer; we have only to illuminate the evidence. So as we move toward a more complex canonicity, we must listen for voices like Ichabod Crane's, speaking in "peculiar quavers" and helping us to recognize the queer in our literature, in our society, and in all of us.



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## The Destructive Satiric Voice in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Satire Jamie Marie Wagner '10

It is often theorized that the purpose of satire is to expose hypocrisy in normative society in order to elicit reform. According to Felicity Nussbaum, in her 1984 book *The Brick of All We Hate: English Satires on Women*, "It is frequently argued that the negative aspects of satire must be juxtaposed to a positive ideal – that the criticism in satire implies the hope of something better" (4). The possible validity of this interpretation is similarly examined by Brian Connery and Kirk Combe in the introduction to their 1995 book on *Theorizing Satire*, where "high-minded and usually socially oriented moral and intellectual reform" is noted as the ostensible motivation for "virtually all English satirists from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century" (2). Robert C. Elliot, in *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*, attributes a comparable moralizing incentive to the ancient invective of Archilochus, citing a "tone of righteous indignation" which can be "attached to a feeling of moral mission" (11). Most simply, while attempting to identify concisely the "Necessary and Sufficient Conditions" of the satiric genre, Don Nilsen maintains that satire must "ridicule certain aspects of society in order that these aspects can be looked at more critically, perhaps even changed" (4).

John Dryden, however, as described by Kirk Combe in his essay on "Shadwell as Lord of Misrule," cites Cicero as an explanation of Varronian satire, a method he claims to apply to his own work: "You have begun Philosophy in many Places: sufficient to incite us, though too little to instruct us." Dryden describes Varro in a similar way, claiming that "as Learned as he was, his business was more to divert his Reader, than to teach him" (3). Combe goes on to describe Menippean satire in similar terms, noting "the feeling that there is probably no abstract certainty outside of us that we can know." Finding "its philosophical foundations in Cynicism and Pyrrhonism, the most radical forms of ancient skepticism," Menippean satire has "at its heart the potentially distressing notions that ... 'naked, ultimate questions' with an ethical and practical basis are raised, but they are not answered" (4). James Noggle, in his book on *The Skeptical Sublime: Aesthetic Ideology in Pope and Tory Satirists*, gives a comparable definition



for Pyrrhonism – a “radical version” of skepticism with “roots in ancient Greek philosophical schools” – and notes its common arguments “that nothing may be known for certain and that we should withhold assent from all propositions” (15). Such a description of satiric purpose quite explicitly contrasts that divulged by modern literary critics who, according to Rose Zimbardo in her essay on “The Semiotics of Restoration Satire,” “cannot see beyond the eighteenth-century binary model for satire, which determines that in order to be satire a text must direct us toward a positive norm, must contain or, at least indirectly, uphold a clear moral satiric antithesis” (23). Although much of the celebrated satire on contemporary culture written in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries profoundly exhibits a spirit of indignant condemnation and harshly destructive criticism, when read in consideration of these two differing systems of satiric theory, it is clear that there is very little in the major works of Dryden, Rochester, Swift, Pope, and Johnson that can be construed as the practical reconstructive or edifying sentiment suggested by Nussbaum, Nilsen, and Elliot.

In this paper, I hope to assert with credibility and persuasion the possibility that the satiric genre may be more hopelessly and harmfully deconstructive than moralizing or reformative. I intend briefly to identify the central criticizing arguments in a number of major satiric works – John Dryden’s *Mac Flecknoe*, Rochester’s *Satire Against Reason and Mankind*, Jonathon Swift’s *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, Alexander Pope’s *Dunciad* and “Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,” Juvenal’s *Satire X*, and Samuel Johnson’s *Vanity of Human Wishes* – in order to illustrate the use of satire as a rejection of conventional ideologies and cultural behaviors, as well as to expose the ultimately pessimistic and inconclusive ending of each work. More thoroughly, I intend to identify the spiteful accusations against women put forth by Pope in his “Epistle to a Lady,” particularly those that find congruous depictions in the works of his contemporaries – like that of Jonathon Swift in “The Lady’s Dressing Room” – as well as in the works of his ancient predecessors, notably in John Dryden’s 17<sup>th</sup> century translation of “The Sixth Satyr of Juvenal.” By exploring the debilitating contradictions offered to women in the text as alternatives to their deficient behavior, I intend to establish Pope’s epistle as a particularly destructive and unsympathetic work.

To begin with, in *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden completely chastises the bad poetry and common art of his contemporaries, equating “Heywood,

Shirley” and “Ogilby” – notoriously incompetent writers – with “loads of Sh-----” (102-103). These verses particularly serve as both a specific blow against Shadwell and as a statement on the quality of his work. Later, Dryden makes use of the convention of a satiric mask as a means of criticizing in a way that can elicit no defense – a convention he presents in his “Art of Satire” as a fundamental feature of the genre. In the words of Dryden, a satirist must “make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave without using any of those opprobrious terms” (2131). Similarly, he asserts, although “the occasion of an offence may possibly be given” – as it is undeniably in the extremely local and personal satires of the 17<sup>th</sup> century – “a witty man... cannot take it” (2131), and the poet is absolved from taking responsibility for his words. By framing his criticism as Flecknoe’s praise, Dryden is able to explicitly identify Shadwell’s inefficiencies, the “mild anagram” (204) and “inoffensive satires” (200) which fail to express the “gall” (201) and “venom” of his “felonious heart” (202). In the end, however, although Flecknoe is defeated – “his last words... scarcely heard / For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared, / And down they sent the yet declaiming bard” (211-213) – instead of reconstructing a world of literature that Dryden would deem more adequate and appropriate, the incompetence and inanity of Flecknoe is passed on to Shadwell: “The mantle fell to the young prophet’s part/ With double portion of his father’s art” (216-217). In such a way, Dryden leaves his reader with no indication of an optimistic future – no reasonable or acceptable alternative to the “misrule” of bad poets.

The very lifestyle and ideology of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester – as a libertine, a hedonist, an epicurean, a nihilist, a skeptic, and a democritean satirist – depends on the deconstruction of conventional society. In his *Satire Against Reason and Mankind*, Rochester disassembles what Marianne Thormahlen describes in her book *Rochester: The Poems in Context* as all “essential components in the religious and philosophical developments and controversies of the seventeenth century” (163), attributing nearly every immoral or illogical proclivity of man to his “wrong reason” – the truth constructed by church and government based on the theological assumption of human divinity. “‘Tis this very reason I despise,” he writes, “This supernatural gift, that makes a mite / Think he’s the image of the infinite” (75-77). These institutions, he claims, “swollen with selfish vanity,” “devise / False freedoms, holy cheats and formal lies” which they



use "to tyrannize" "their fellow slaves" (176-179). This perception of authority as a perpetuation of "False freedoms" and "formal lies" pointedly recalls a 1977 interview with critical theorist Michel Foucault titled "Truth and Power," wherein Foucault defines truth as a mechanistic function of power, claiming that the dominant authority in society creates a "discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (1144), a conventional episteme perpetuated by those in power for the sake of remaining in control. As a result, according to Rochester, nothing understood and accepted by man can be depended upon as stable or as stably virtuous. In the words of Kirk Combe in his 1998 book on *Rochester's Critique of Polity, Sexuality and Society*, the "late seventeenth-century Englishman" is confronted by the poet with an "intolerable choice": "either impose spurious, ludicrous, and destructive order on the world via the misapplication of reason, or cope with earthly chaos" (71). Rochester stands by this pessimistic perception in his "Addition," where he denies the existence of any "upright... statesman" (185), any "churchman who on God relies" (191), or any "meek humble man of honest sense" (216). What's even more telling is that, while the "wrong reason" of church and government are rejected, the poet's own "true reason" (111), "that reason which distinguishes by sense, / And gives us rules of good and ill from thence" (100-101), is never thoroughly or practically defined beyond this vague discussion – one noted by Combe for its resemblance of "prevailing libertine freethinking and extreme skepticism." He even goes on to undercut right reason as "a workable countersolution to contemporary paranoia and will-to-power" (Combe 71) with the declaration: "Thus I think reason righted, but for man, / I'll ne'er recant, defend him if you can" (112-113). In such a way, after completely dismantling the institutions which form the foundation of his society, Rochester affords his reader no pragmatic reconstruction.

Interestingly, Jonathon Swift, in his *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, makes the same accusations against the developing Whig party that Rochester makes against conservative political and religious institutions. He believes that the priority of the government is self-interest – advising his readership to "never put thy trust" "in princes" (342) – and he reveals the falseness of the social structure developed and perpetuated by the Whigs, who "turn religion to a fable / And make the government a Babel / Pervert the laws" and "disgrace the crown" (384-386). Just as Foucault describes the often inaccurate episteme created by those in power, the "discourse...

[they accept] and [make] function as true," Swift accuses the liberal British of debasing "old England's glory" with fabricated truth, making "her infamous in story" (387-388). Ironically, while Swift establishes the Whig party and those that echo their ideologies as a "destructive scene" (392), he offers no constructive advice as an alternative, despite explicitly claiming this purpose: "The Dean did, by his pen, defeat / An infamous destructive cheat; / Taught fools their interest how to know, / And gave them arms to ward the blow" (407-410). The particularity of these "arms," however, aside from a largely detrimental awareness of the hypocrisy and inefficiency of the enemy, is never actually divulged in the poem as a means of guiding the reader to virtue. Similarly, he claims that "his satire points at no defect / But what all mortals may correct" (463-464) without instructing his audience on how these corrections can possibly be achieved.

Even more startling is the sheer devastation of Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* – his scathing invalidation of the entire foundation of contemporary ideology. Under the rule of the prevailing "Dulness" (19) of normative society, Pope finds that "Science groans in chains," that "Wit dreads exile," that "Logic" has been "gagged and bound," and that "fair Rhetoric," "stripped," lies "languished on the ground" (21-24). He attributes such systematic degeneration of intellect to institutions such as "Westminster" (145), where critical thinking is replaced – and "thought" "confine[d] – by mindless recitation – the "breath" "exercise[d]" (161). Rather than encouraging students "to ask, to guess," or "to know" (155), these Foucauldian perpetuators of oppressive ideological conventions work to "ply the memory," to "load the brain," to "bind rebel wit, and double chain on chain" (157-158). What's more, he charges the meticulous triviality of "Physic" (645) and "Mathematics" (647) with the demystification and the dehumanization of "Philosophy" (643) and "Religion" (649), a paradigm shift which results in the "expir[ation]" of "Morality" (650). Pope ends his seething assault on society apocalyptically, where, contrary to the light of God's creation, the goddess of Dulness "restore[s]" "CHAOS!" and "buries All" in "Universal Darkness" (652-656). His readers, then, have no path to take but that of Dulness, who advises them to "be proud, be selfish, and be dull" (582). Furthermore, in his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," Pope blames bad taste in contemporary art and poetry for the decline of state and culture in eighteenth-century England – as, with "Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand" poor writers and



common people “rave, recite, and madden round the land” (5-6). Similar to Swift’s rather self-righteous declaration of satiric purpose in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* – the identification of the “defects” of “mortals” in order that they may be reformed – Pope reserves his praise for the poet who has “moralized his song,” “not for fame, but virtue’s better end” (341-342). Notably, he goes on to condemn his inefficient contemporaries as “damning critic[s]” (344) – an ironic choice of words for a satirist who, in *The Dunciad*, has damned all of humanity to “Universal Darkness” through relentless criticism and a refusal to suggest acceptable alternatives to what he declares to be reprehensible behavior.

Connery and Combe, in the introduction to *Theorizing Satire*, go on to note that, although 18<sup>th</sup> century satiric writers often feign the “high-minded” purpose of “moral and intellectual reform,” they actually “engage in something quite different, namely, mercilessly savage attack on some person or thing that, frequently for private reasons, displeases them” (2). This somewhat underhanded application of satire as pointed personal incrimination is apparent in Dryden’s attack on Shadwell, as well as in the religious and political satires of Rochester and Swift. For many men, however, in the words of Connery and Combe, “satire, as a literature of... attack,” was used as “a form of power exerted frequently against women” (11-12). In reading Pope’s epistle “To a Lady,” for example, one can easily identify Nussbaum’s “criticism,” Elliott’s “righteous indignation,” and Nilsen’s “ridicule.” Clearly, the speaker’s misogynistic tirade is meant to “exhibit” the “universal characteristics of inconstancy, pride, and self-love” accepted as the principle degenerative qualities of women in the period (Nussbaum 137). What fails again to appear in the poem, however, is the moralizing intention hypothesized by satiric theorists. In fact, after viciously deconstructing the deplorable behavior – and, thereby, the very nature – of women, Pope leaves his female readership with little hope for self-improvement. While Nussbaum would argue that the character of Martha Blount is presented “as an ideal for her sex, a norm against which we measure... highly entertaining but woefully deficient women” (154), closer examination reveals that Blount is a completely paradoxical embodiment of the same conflicting qualities that Pope purports to ridicule. In such a way, “To a Lady” is not a means of inducing societal reform, but a perpetuation of entrenching misogynistic conventions, a depiction of women specifically

that remains to be as bleak and incriminating as his depiction of human nature in *The Dunciad*.

Most explicitly, in his poem, Pope condemns women for their flagrant changeability. He begins by imploring the artist of a woman’s portrait to “Catch, ere she changes, the Cynthia of this minute” (20), and he reproaches “Narcissa” (53), who fluctuates spontaneously between “conscience” and “passion,” “atheism and religion” (65-66). He also notes “Soft Silia, fearful to offend” (33), who, without warning, “storms!” and “raves!” (33) upon finding “a pimple on her nose” (36). Such an enlivened response to a trivial inconvenience represents a lack of discretion and a distortion of priorities which were wildly criticized in satiric literature against women. In Canto 2 of his *Rape of the Lock*, for example, Pope describes several possible disasters that plague Belinda’s consciousness:

Whether the nymph shall break Diana’s law,  
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,  
Or stain her honor, or her new brocade,  
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade,  
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball  
Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall. (105-

110)

By juxtaposing a number of trivial mishaps, a missed masquerade or a lost necklace, with more poignant and emotional traumas, stained honor or a lost heart, the poet highlights the inability of the woman to distinguish the truly significant aspects of her existence. Most significantly, Pope does not limit his description of the naïveté of women to young aristocrats, but expands his illustration, in Canto 3, to include Queen Anne herself, with the biting suggestion that she cannot differentiate between base practices and the politics of court: “Here thou, great Anne! whom three realms obey/ Dost sometimes counsel take – and sometimes tea” (7-8). Juvenal’s Sixth Satire, as translated by John Dryden, identifies a similar misplaced priority in women who, having “Read th’ Example of a Pious Wife, / Redeeming, with her own, her Husband’s Life,” “Wou’d save their Lapdog sooner than their Lord” (853). Similarly, in “To a Lady,” Pope recalls Juvenal’s reproach for both the chastising wife – “the She-Tyrant” (316) – and the insufferable female scholar, whose “Wit” becomes “a burthen, when it talks too long” (573). To Pope, such a woman appears “Less wit than mimic” and “more a wit than wise” (48).



Significantly, Pope relies on the conventional perception that "Every woman is at heart a rake" (216), a pleasure-seeker and an uncontrollable sexual force. As a result of this compulsive lust, the sanctity of marriage can never be maintained, and although appearing "chaste to her husband," Pope asserts, a woman will be "frank to all besides" (71). Juvenal echoes this position as well, in writing of the woman who "duely, once a Month, renews her Face" for her "Husband's Nights," while "to the Lov'd Adult'rer," at any other moment, "appears" "in brightness" (593-398). This systematic promiscuity leads inevitably to an interesting, unfortunate circumstance – where the "Legacy" (Dryden 302) of a man will be left to the children of "Her Ruffians, Drudges, and Adulterers," unknowingly adopted as his "Hiers" (306-307). Pope explores this idea as well, as "Atossa" allows "the unguarded store" to descend "to heirs unknown" (147-149).

Lastly, Pope considers the superficial pretense of women, the quality that really facilitates men's susceptibility to their manipulations. About a "Queen" (182), Pope observes that her "robe of quality so struts and swells" that "None see what parts of Nature it conceals" (189-190). These suspected parts inevitably recall "Those secrets of the hoary deep" discovered by Strephon in "Celia's chamber" of Jonathon Swift's "Lady's Dressing Room" (96-98). Similarly, Pope notes that the public persona adopted by a woman allows "none" to "distinguish 'twixt" her "shame or pride, / Weakness or delicacy" (204-205).

Pope's condemnation of a woman's artificiality also presents a significant first example of his largely contradictory and inconclusive presentation of Martha Blount as "an ideal for her sex," glorified, according to Nussbaum, for her "sense," "good humor" and "virtue" (154). By soliciting the female to hold her "temper" (257) and, "if she rules" her husband, to "never show she rules" (262), Pope entreats her to develop a public persona in the same capacity that he afore rejects. As Nussbaum reasonably notes, in the "final series of paradoxes" offered by the poet, "the woman to whom the poem is addressed resembles the Queen [of line 182] in that we are only allowed to know her general qualities – to know her exterior rather than her hidden core" (156). The other virtues of his female companion that Pope extols in his poem comprise a further perpetuation of the conventional misogynistic ideology of the period, described by Nussbaum as "a chaste companion... even-tempered, patient, modest, and

prudent" (5). In the words of Pope, the ideal woman "ne'er answers till a husband cools" (261), "has her humor most, when she obeys" (264), and, paradoxically, can only win control of her self and her household "by submitting" (263). Moreover, Pope's paradoxical conclusions really allow his female readership no opportunity to improve upon their deficiencies, since "woman" is "at best a contradiction" (270). According to Nussbaum, "in the fiction of satire, men describe women as inherently giddy and unstable, while on the other they create an ideal woman, the mirror of their highest expectations, who is to establish order in the domestic sphere" (5). In Foucauldian terms, the perpetuation of these contradictory standards in women affords the satirist – as well as the male authority in society – a dominant position, as the "technologies of power introduced since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" require that one "grasp... a multiple and differentiated reality" (1141). As a result, Pope's incessant berating in "To a Lady" achieves the critical intention of satire, without offering a realistic or attainable model for reform.

This disparity – Pope's ability to debase half the English population without the justification of a moral mission – is made possible by his adoption of a satiric voice. Exploring the ephemeral quality of beauty, Pope feigns sympathy toward the women who find themselves powerless when youth has passed, entreating his readership to "mark the fate of a whole sex of queens" (229). He undercuts his own sincerity, however, with ironic hyperbole, referring to the aged women as "hags" (239) and "ghosts of beauty" (241), who find themselves "fair to no purpose, artful to no end, / Young without lovers, old without a friend" (245-246). What's more, he ends his poem by praising the discretion of the woman who can appreciate his words, as she has received from a "generous god, who wit and gold refines" (289), "good sense, good humor, and a poet" (292) to direct her to a virtuous life. In the words of Nussbaum, the use of a narrative satiric voice allows the poet and his readers to separate themselves temporarily from identification with his victim, and "he may, for a time, create a rhetorical stance... which absolves him and his readers from the responsibility for all that he finds reprehensible" (3-4). Effectively, as a result, "the reader of 'To a Lady' is led along with Martha Blount to agree that the rest of the sex is contemptible, and... she is entertained at the expense of her sex" (Nussbaum 157).



Similar to the ironic depiction of Martha Blount as an ideal yet ultimately powerless woman, the pattern of criticizing without offering a pragmatic means for reform varies in John Dryden's translation of Juvenal's *Satire X* and Samuel Johnson's adaptation, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, in that each poem ostensibly offers a reconstructive ending. After dismissing the possibility that any man "can distinguish / A false from a worthwhile objective" (2-3) in order to understand what is good for him – believing human "reason" (5) to be a "[fog] of deception" (4) and a "self-destructive urge" (9) – Juvenal offers the advice to "Let the Gods themselves determine what's most appropriate / For mankind, and what best suits our various circumstances" since 'they'll give us the things we need, not those we want" (347-349). Johnson, condemning the self-righteousness of man's "stubborn choice," "bold hand," and "suppliant voice" (11-12), echoes Juvenal by suggesting that we "leave to Heaven the measure and the choice" (352). However – because neither poet affords his reader any active power in determining his fate, this can hardly be considered a reconstructive ideology. More tellingly, Juvenal offers the observation that "There's one path, and one only, to a life of peace – through virtue." However, just as Rochester never substantially defines his "true reason," Juvenal really divulges nothing as to what this virtue entails. Samuel Johnson does him one better by suggesting a "healthful mind" (359), "love" (361), "patience" (362), and "faith" (363) – but these somewhat arbitrary values cannot possibly provide foundation for a new, more efficient and enlightened society. Finally, according to Johnson, the success of man depends on his "obedient passions, and a will resigned" (360), which is more of a passive acceptance than a epistemological paradigm, and, notably, these same "obedient passions" and "resigned" "will" are what empower the truth-perpetuating power elite suggested by Foucault and rejected by Rochester, Swift, and Pope in their major works.

In this case, the question can be raised as to the actual intended purpose of satire. Obviously, if works that were allegedly written to incite "moral and intellectual reform" ultimately succeed only in devastation of conventional epistemological systems without pragmatic reconstruction and those that are meant to refute social biases by exposing hypocrisies serve instead to perpetuate the oppressive prevailing ideology, there can exist no possibility for Elliot's "feeling of moral mission" or for Nussbaum's "positive ideal" or "hope of something better." What's more, because the

only alternative, according to Juvenal and Samuel Johnson, is a submission to the will of a higher authority, the suspicion can be raised, in consideration of the monarchical absolutism predominantly glorified by these major English poets, that satire may be an inherently conservative genre – one ultimately supportive of the ideologies of normative society.

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